

IV. Hillside

A. LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Primary Uses: [RECREATION AND] Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Water Resources throughout; Recreation, Grazing, [WATER RESOURCES] and Forestry in designated areas as shown on Amendment Map [6] 4

Secondary Uses: Forestry and Recreation in designated high value areas

Prohibited Uses: Settlement; Remote Cabin Permits; Grazing in areas I and V on Amendment Map 4 [OUTSIDE DESIGNATED AREAS (SEE MAP 3, PAGES 116/117)]

Mining: Open

Classification: (See Amendment Map 4)

Area I Water Resources, Wildlife Habitat

Area II Grazing, Public Recreation, Wildlife Habitat

Area III Grazing, Public Recreation, Wildlife Habitat

Area IV Forestry, Grazing, Wildlife Habitat

Area V Public Recreation, Water Resources, Wildlife Habitat

B. BACKGROUND

This subunit has a rich variety of natural resources, and demands on these resources are expected to increase significantly as private lands adjacent to the southern border are settled and the proposed four-season resort on state land to the east is developed. This is important moose habitat for both winter and summer, and is expected to become increasingly important as private lands along the Little Susitna River to the south are developed. A significant moose harvest occurs here and is expected to increase as new access is developed. It is also a black bear, small game, and furbearer area.

The mature, mixed white spruce-birch forest is an important value below the 1000-foot elevation. Spur roads for firewood cutting are being utilized and developed south of this subunit on university lands. The forested areas in this subunit have high potential for creating productive, replacement moose habitat for summer and winter range lost to development on adjacent private lands and the proposed resort in the Government Peak Subunit.

Recreational use is light at present due to limited access. Current use is for hunting, trapping, horseback riding, hiking, skiing and snow machining. Excellent opportunities exist for development of track skiing and dispersed recreational trails to serve growing valley communities south of the subunit.

Extensive [SAVANNAH-TYPE] meadows and open woodlands with bluejoint understory provide a band of high grazing potential across the unit. There is an existing grazing lease on the western end and one application in the central portion.

Mineral potential is moderate to low; no claims exist at present and no past mining activity is known.

Streams in this subunit are lateral tributaries to the Little Susitna River. Water quality in the streams in this subunit is assumed (although not proven) to be important in the protection and maintenance of the downstream fisheries resource in the Little Susitna River. The subunit is important as a watershed for the populated area south of the subunit.

The upper area has unstable slopes, fracture zones, and potentially unstable materials. There is high avalanche potential along almost the entire upper slope; lower portions have some potential. An active fault system crosses the lower Hillside, and there are scattered areas of unstable material. Water is near the surface in many of the lower areas of the subunit; careful engineering is necessary in these areas where roads and trails may be constructed to prevent water ponding and drainage problems.

Three sections in the southwest portion of the subunit are mental health lands (see Map 11 in original plan).

C. MANAGEMENT INTENT

The management intent is to utilize forest and grass resources while maintaining the important moose habitat through habitat protection and enhancement and by providing open space adjacent to the developing private lands and the proposed four-season resort; to improve access for big and small game hunting and a variety of other trail-related recreational activities; and to maintain the scenic and watershed qualities of this front range which forms the backdrop for the Wasilla and Palmer area below; and to make most of the high-quality rangelands which occur below the 1500-foot elevation available for grazing through leases or permits.

To provide a diversity of recreational experiences and wildlife habitats across the [SUBUNIT] front range, [SECTION I (SEE FIGURE 7, PAGE 222) WILL HAVE MORE INTENSIVE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING SUSTAINED YIELD FORESTRY HARVEST, ENHANCEMENT FOR MOOSE BROWSE, GRAZING, RECREATION TRAILS, AND POSSIBLE LODGE SITES. SECTION II WILL HAVE A MORE MODERATE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING FORESTRY FOR HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PURPOSES AND GRAZING. THE EASTERN SECTION III (SEE FIGURE 7, PAGE 222) WILL EMPHASIZE MAINTAINING A NATURAL APPEARING SETTING (AS COMPARED TO

SECTION I) AND AT THE SAME TIME ALLOW FOR MOOSE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT. GRAZING WILL BE ALLOWED IN SECTION III AFTER 1996. THE PURPOSE OF THE DELAY IS TO ALLOW ESTABLISHMENT OF A RECREATIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM TO OCCUR FIRST.] a large portion of this unit will be managed to maintain a natural setting (below 1500 feet in T19N, R1W, S.M., sections 25, 31 to 35 and the north 1/2 of Section 36; and T18N, R1W, S.M., the north 1/2 of Section 5). The intent is to provide the option for a recreational trail system in a natural setting to the extent consistent with other resource values. Forestry is a primary use in Section 7 (T18N, R1W, S.M.) and a secondary use in the south half of sections 5 and 6. Intensive wildlife habitat enhancement is the primary use of Section 31 (T19N, R1E, S.M.), and the SE 1/4 of Section 36 (T19N, R1W, S.M.), to offset loss of moose habitat in Government Peak subunit B. Enhancement is also an important use in portions of sections 5, 6, and 7 in T18N, R1W, S.M. Grazing will be allowed throughout except in Section 31 (T19N, R1E, S.M.) and the SW 1/4 of Section 36 (T19N, R1W, S.M.). (See Map 4 in this document for proposed changes to Hillside Subunit.)

The entire area is open to mining.

Because of the importance of this area as open space adjacent to the developing valley area as well as for moose habitat, the long-term intent is for the area to be managed at least in part for non-motorized recreational use. Closures to motorized use may be established as needed to accommodate non-motorized trail systems. The intent is to continue opportunities for moose and black bear hunting and the use of motorized vehicles for that purpose on existing public roads and trails until alternate access routes and trailheads are developed.

See guideline 8 below regarding the effect of this plan on the three sections of mental health land in this subunit. They are Sections 5, 6 and 7 of T18N, R 1 W, SM.

D. PLANNED ACTIONS

1. RECREATION (See Map 11 for locations)

- a. Allow establishment of a cross-country trail system [ON THE WEST AND EAST ENDS] to meet the needs of valley ski and running teams, hikers, and horseback riders.
- b. Trailhead (100 spaces), west end, Section 7, southeast corner, tied to the proposed forestry access road, an eventual 18-20 mile (30 km) trail system, possible recreation lease site.